



Mensionization Complementation

The Mathematics of Hermetic Alchemy

The *Tree of Life*

An Introduction

Part II of *The Evolution of Matter & The Soul*

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The most common and fundamental representation of the descent of Divine Light from intangible Unity into perceivable multiplicity is known as the **ETZ CHAIM**, or **Tree of Life**. The Tree of Life is comprised of ten spheres which identify specific aspects of the Divine Light as it condenses from the abstract and amorphous primal substance into solid, tangible matter. It must be mentioned that this sequence, considered as distinct and differentiated concepts of Divinity, is merely an illusion created so that humanity, in it's imperfect existence, can seek to come close to the Divine. A common metaphor used in the Hebrew Qabalistic texts is that of a series of filters and/or lenses which affect our perception of the Light, but not the Essence of the Light itself. The most common and practical diagram of the Tree of Life is shown in Figure 1.

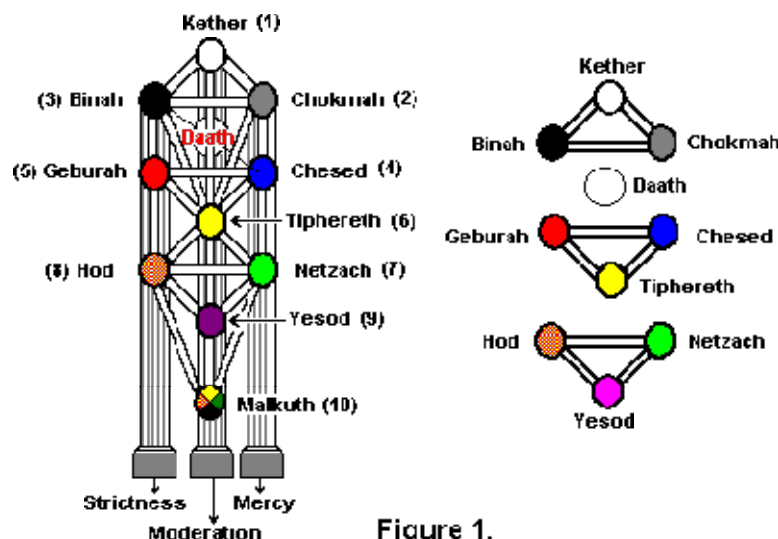


Figure 1.

The first thing that should be noticed is that the spheres have been arranged on three vertical lines, or "Pillars", as they are called in Qabala. The next thing to observe is that the spheres numbered one through nine have been organized into three triangles, descending sequentially, one from the other, with the tenth sphere as an independent unit emanating from the whole. The three Pillars define certain qualities of the ten spheres as follows: those on the Right (known as the Pillar of Mercy) have qualities of simplicity, expansiveness, bestowal, and providence, while the spheres of the Left Pillar (known as the Pillar of Strictness) have qualities of multiplicity, restriction, reception, and temporality. Between the Right and Left Pillars is the Middle Pillar of Moderation where the polarized qualities of the Right and Left are brought together and reconciled in harmony and balance. The three descending triangles define the cosmological aspects of the Tree, as will be explained. Although the three triangles and the tenth sphere can be seen as a sequence of four, they should not, at this point, be related to the Tetragrammaton. This, also, will be explained later.

It could be immediately asked that, if the Middle Pillar is the reconciliation of the polarized extremes represented by Right and Left, how and why does the sequence of the ten spheres begin in the Middle Pillar? The answer is that the first sphere, called **Keter** - meaning "**Crown**" - represents the indivisible Divine Unity. As the Unique Source of all the spheres, it is, by necessity, the highest and purest conceptualization of Harmony and Balance, from which all other phases, defined as extremes or the reconciliation of these extremes, are emanated. Each subsequent sphere which manifests on the Middle Pillar must be seen as a reflection of the Essential Unity of Keter.

Keter is the level of pure Unity: Divine existence which has no dependence on anything other than itself. When the scheme of the Tree of Life is applied to analyze a subject, Keter represents the unique Essence ("**Etzem**") of the subject in its purest integrity; the subsequent spheres can only define qualities of the subject in relation to, or as perceived by, something other than itself. As such, Keter corresponds to the "source substance" or "quintessence" as discussed concerning the four elements. By its very nature, this Source exists beyond and above any concept of polarities.

In defining the extension of Light-Substance from Divine Nothingness, Keter is the first point from which manifest light extends. As indivisible Unity, it contains in potential all the successive spheres in their full power. An important point is that the ten spheres of the Tree of Life must be

realized as happening simultaneously as one unit. It is only humanity's limited perception and thought processes which need to divide and separate the Light into what are defined as distinct and individual aspects in order to understand it. Yet, to consider ultimate Divinity as anything other than the purest and simplest Unity is absurd. So the Tree of Life was created by G-d for the benefit of humanity's understanding, in order to identify qualities of the Divine for the purpose of self improvement and spiritual advancement.

At the same time, humanity's existence depends on the Tree of Life which separates the physical existence of human multiplicity from Divine Unity. This separation and distance is necessary, because multiple individual consciousness could not exist in proximity to the Divine Unity represented by Keter; it would merely be dissolved into it.

The second of the Ten Spheres of the Tree of Life is called **Chochmah**, Hebrew for "**Wisdom**". Since this is the first extension from pure Unity, the first concept revealed by this sphere is Quantity. But, as the sphere of Chochmah, this is quantity considered as the sum of all the parts of a subject, before any analysis or definition of individual components. It is the whole of an object, comprising all the elements, sub-elements, components, parts, potentials, and projections of the object which constitute an organized body of information. This information is inherently attached to the object, whether or not they are perceived by another. Chochmah is broad, general material, prior to any specification or differentiation of detail. It corresponds to the function of the right brain of an individual; the holistic, artistic consciousness which grasps concepts in their integrity before defining particular detail.

The third sphere of the Tree of Life is called **Binah**, which means "**Understanding**". This sphere is the first intimation of consciousness apart from the Divine because it represents the perception, reception, and understanding of the Wisdom represented by the second sphere. It is also the specification of particular facts and qualities from this general body of Wisdom, and their preparation for application and manifestation. In fact, in relation to Chochmah as identified by the term "Quantity", Binah is called "Quality". This is because, within the structure of the Tree of Life, Chochmah corresponds to the World of Atzilut (the primal spiritual Substance) and Binah corresponds to the World of Briah, where specific, individual qualities and potentials are identified and separated within the primal Substance, as well as their Forms. This is done towards the ultimate end of practical material manifestation. These attributions are the beginning of the

correspondence between the Tree of Life and the Tetragrammaton.

The first three spheres of the Tree of Life function purely at the causative level of events, existing only in the abstract realm of idea, whereas the following seven spheres are the basic archetypes of action and result. Keter, Chochmah, and Binah represent G-d as Creator, and together are called "the Supernals". They are the beginning points of the Three Pillars of Manifestation. Keter is the neutral point initiating the Pillar of Moderation, Chochmah is the beginning of the active, all-encompassing, positive force of the Right Pillar, and Binah is the beginning of the passive, restrictive, negative force of the Left Pillar. These three spheres are the basic substance of the whole Tree of Life. The subsequent triangles are merely "garments" which enclose this Supernal Triad. Since the Supernals contain and determine all potentials that can occur lower in the Tree, the lower spheres must be understood as mere extensions or variations of the Supernals.

Another way of describing the relationship between the Supernal Triad and the Seven Lower spheres is to consider the latter as a "Vehicle" for the former. This way of looking at the Tree of Life is the basis of the application of the Tetragrammaton Formula to the Ten Spheres. This will be explained in due course, after a preliminary explanation of the lower spheres.

The fourth sphere of the Tree of Life, which is the first of the seven lower existential spheres, is called **Chesed**, meaning "**Kindness**". It represents the Kindness and blessings of G-d which allow for, and maintain, lower existence. Chesed is the general force of expansion, emanation, and extension. As a projection of Chochmah and the Pillar of Mercy, Chesed is the **Will to Give**, i.e., that driving force (**Hanhagah**, in Hebrew) in the tangible world that manifests its generosity, charity, forgiveness, mercy, and broadness of view.

The fifth sphere of the Tree of Life is alternately called **Gevurah** - meaning "**Strength**" - or **Din** - which means "**Judgment**" - both having the intimation of strictness and the setting of limits. Gevurah is the power of restriction which contains the expansive energy of Chesed, offsetting any possible imbalances or extremes. An over-abundance of kindness and mercy ultimately degenerates into indulgence and weakness. By setting limits and boundaries to the expansion of Chesed, Gevurah maintains its effectiveness and propriety.

The sixth sphere is called **Tiferet**, which means "**Harmony**". It is the equilibrium achieved

between Chesed and Gevurah. Tiferet reconciles the lenience of the Right Pillar with the discipline of the Left Pillar in a practical manner so that they can both be effectively expressed in harmony and balance. Gevurah offsets imbalanced Chesed, and Tiferet offsets extremes of Gevurah. As the central point in the scheme of the Tree of Life, Tiferet also moderates between the Supernals and manifest materiality.

This triad comprises the essence of the concept of analysis. Chesed represents the merits of a subject, Gevurah represents its faults, and Tiferet represents the balance between them which determines the best application or use of a subject. Central to the Tree of Life scheme, this triad gives its names to the Three Pillars; Chesed defines the dominant quality of the Right Pillar, Gevurah best defines the Left Pillar, and Tiferet is the harmony and moderation of the Middle Pillar.

The three spheres of the next triad can basically be defined as **Action**, **Reaction**, and **Result**. This triad represents the actual functions of a subject in a practical - rather than an abstract or purely intellectual - sense. This triad also represents a subject **in expression**, when it interacts with external details, which are incidental to the essence of the subject itself, but nevertheless have an effect on the course and consequence of its application.

The seventh sphere of the Tree of Life is called **Netzach**, which literally translates as "**Victory**" or "**Perpetuity**", but can be more practically termed "Progress". Netzach is the application, in strength, of the energy stabilized in Tiferet. As Tiferet is the center of the Tree of Life, any motion from Tiferet will be powerful and should be progressive. Netzach represents the powerful progressive potential of the energy of Tiferet channeled and directed towards a specific application.

The next sphere, **Hod**, represents that which is acted upon by, or reacts to, Netzach. Netzach cannot be clearly comprehended without relation to Hod, and vice versa. The name "Hod" is Hebrew for "**Glory**", which is the natural consequence of the Victory of Netzach. Hod represents the environmental factors and external influences which determine how the function of Netzach is to be achieved. It is both the external forces that must be adapted to in a particular situation and the resources at hand which may be utilized in order to achieve the progressive action of Netzach. Netzach and Hod, being more particular to accidental circumstances rather than being inherent

aspects of the cause being realized, have been corresponded with **Time** and **Place**, respectively. These aspects of Netzach and Hod are not inherent at the causative level of an action, but they do, of course, have a major influence on the effect.

The ninth sphere of the Tree of Life is called **Yesod**, which means "**Foundation**". Yesod is the fixation of a subject or action within the Time and Place of Netzach and Hod. It represents the actual event, or "position" achieved, within this context. Yesod is seen as the culmination and ultimate expression of all the previous spheres and triads.

The sequences of Chesed-Gevurah-Tiferet and Netzach-Hod-Yesod are the archetypal structure of the process of Formation, i.e., they are the World of Yetzirah. These spheres comprise the formative phase of the analysis and synthesis of the components in preparation for its actual manifestation. The final phase of active manifestation, which corresponds to the World of Assiah, is the tenth and concluding sphere of the Tree of Life. This sphere is called **Malchut**, meaning "**Kingdom**". Malchut is the end result of the process of Netzach-Hod-Yesod, which, in turn, is the specific application in a particular situation of the force of Chesed-Gevurah-Tiferet. Malchut is the level of ultimate effect as seen in relation to the initial goal defined in the abstract causative level of the Supernal triad. The value of this Effect is dependent on how well the phase of Yetzirah expresses the Cause as determined in the Supernal level that contains the Worlds of Atzilut and Briah (Chochmah and Binah). Malchut also represents the field of action, or vessel, for the expression of all the previous spheres and phases of emanation. Thus, like the element of Earth, Malchut corresponds to the human body and its environment.

